Building of an indigenous aircraft carrier

176. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have approved the proposal for building an indigenous aircraft carrier;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how long it would take to commission this aircraft carrier?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Ministry of Defence have approved the proposal to build anindigenous Air Defence Ship. The proposal is being processed for further appropriate clearance.

Postponement of test firing of Agni

177. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the test firing of Agni, India's Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile, which was fixed for the 26th January, 1999 was postponed indefinitely;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether a new date would be fixed for its test firing; if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Does not arise as the test firing of Agni was not scheduled on 26th January, 1999.

Retired defence officers engaged in arms business

178. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some of the retired defence officers holding top ranks are engaged in arms business;

(b) if so, the details therefor; and

(c) the details of the policy of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) As per the existing instructions, Defence Services Officers are required to obtain prior permission of the Government for accepting any commercial employment within a period of two years from the date of retirement. Appointment in sensitive areas of Defence procurements is not permitted.

Raising of retirement age

179. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in the Pioneer dated 10th December, 1998, under the heading, "Army Medical Corps in a Jam";

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have since taken any decision on the representation made by the officers of Army Medical Corps for raising their retirement age upto 62; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, under what rule these officers are continuing on their post, even after attaining the age of superannuation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Pending issue of final Government orders enhancing the retirement age of officers belonging to the Army Medical Corps (AMC), an interim order was issued on 30.5.1998 defering retirement of Armed Forces Personnel, except *inter alia*, the Lieutenant Generals in the Army Medical Corps. Thereafter, another interim order was issued on 29.7.1998 deferring the retirement of these Lieutenant Generals also. A final view will be taken soon.